

outposts

No. 2

Edited by HOWARD SERGEANT

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This poetry folio has been established to provide a convenient platform for the younger writers. We are concerned not only with the publication of outstanding poetry at a reasonable price, but also in assembling those poets, recognised and unrecognised, who, by reason of the particular outposts they occupy, are able to visualise the dangers and opportunities which confront the individual and the whole of humanity, now and after the war. In so far as these objects are achieved, "Outposts" will perform a vital public service.

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DEFENSIVE POSITION

JOHN MANIFOLD

CUPPING her chin and lying there, the Bren
Watches us make her bed the way a queen
Might watch her slaves. The eyes of a machine,
Like those of certain women, now and then

Put an unsettling influence on men
Making them suddenly feel how they are seen :—
Full of too many purposes, hung between
Impulse and impulse like a child of ten.

The careless challenge, issued so off-handed,
Seems like to go unanswered by default—
A strong position, small but not commanded
By other heights, compels direct assault.

The gunner twitches, and unreprimanded
Eases two tensions, running home the bolt.

THE MUSICIAN

HONOR ARUNDEL

HIS scarred hand jabs the starting lever,
The belt whirls and in perfect time
The shining drill begins to quiver
And bites the steel with silver flame.

He sees the gleaming curls of metal
Capture the light and sway and twist,
Shining in ringlets fine and brittle
Under the movement of his wrist.

And as he pauses he remembers
How from these same hands music came ;
The hall vibrated in its timbers,
The silence split with silver flame :

How men were hushed, awake and shaken,
Strained to the tempo of the drum,
Stirred by the words his hands were speaking,
His hands that now are deft but dumb.

And yet he hears above the clatter
The fiddles and the flutes returning
As a man swimming under water
Knows that above the sun is burning.

PRAYER FOR FEAR

SYDNEY D. TREMAYNE

O SLEEP, sleep, has night no mercy ?
Surely forgetfulness is cheap, surely
It is a little thing to need, merely
Under the cool white flood to slip,
To wash the mind of blood, to feel the silence
Creep over the lips and soothe the writhing words
And shut the eyes, shut out the fret, shut out—
O sleep, deep, still, blessing of beasts,
Shut out this night. Shut out identity.

Spirit of pity, shackle the mind to doom ;
Hamper the restive mind with little cares
Until it cease to rear ; dull the mind's ear
To quivering pitch of pain that wounds to hear ;
Dilute, degrade, resign with a brute despair ;
Send even fear that maniac runs at death
And awes him with his blood-blind, pitiless stare.
Send fear that withers with supernatural fire
The mind's frail, fabricated pain
And leaps and laughs like fire in glory of power.
And then ?—O take soft manshape from me,
Leave only the will to live.

TIME FOR ANGER

For France

HOWARD SERGEANT

PERHAPS you will forgive us if we brood
too much
Upon our personal griefs : if, in our fever,
we march
Hysterically the long dry roads, finding no cause
For laughter, no faith in a season where sun
spreads golden lies
Across the hedges and history litters the wistful mind
With its wreckage ; where even the towering
poplars bend
To the vandal wind. Can we exploit our
own disasters,
Invoke a second Red Sea crossing to restore
the vistas
Of youth ?

Evening is kind to invalids and France.
Evening, whose hidden voices brook no impotence
Or gestures of defeat, will pronounce the
the terrible word
That marks the time for anger, the vampire's
lust for blood ;
And we will surely answer them, the desperate ones,
In their own grim language, weapon for weapon,
guns
For guns. Then the streets and stars belong
to us once more,
And we atone for weakness with courage, with
implacable fire.

February 1944

THE UNBORN

SARAH STAFFORD

WILL the tree bloom again, and the red field
Suffer the soft invasion of the wheat ?
Will the bomb-crater be a standing pool
Where little boys catch minnows ? Will the town
Cover its scars and ring its bells again ?
Shall we have peace at morning, and at noon
No gun to shake the quiet of the hills ?
And in the dusty lane, no bullets' hail,
Only the small sweet clamour of the birds ?
All this shall come, and we have peace again,
A haunted peace, for we have done a thing
The ancient gods, in all their wrath had wept for.
We have robbed the world of a myriad human faces
And twice a myriad beauty-making hands.
For in the bodies of the slain in battle
And in the dark wombs of the mourning women
Lie lovely nations, never to be born.
Some, it may be, better unborn, but some
Irreparable losses, and for these,
Not in eternity can we atone.
Not in eternity can we remember
The song unsung, nor read the word unwritten.
Nor see the coloured landscape through the eyes
And the warm minds of artists never born.
So, when a man lays down his lusty life
To save his land, he says with dying breath,
" Here, people, since you need it, is my life
And my son's life, yes, and my son's son's life.
And my wife's joy, and all our sums of joy
And God knows what of richness and delight
That might have flowed from me. You make
me now,
In death, a sad, perpetual Abraham—
Slaying my son, slaying my son forever.
You know there is no thicket and no rain
And no reprieving angel at my side."

HOMECOMING

J. RODERICK WEBB

IF IT were stranger seated here,
a child or other refugee,
what would he hear and fear ?

Only the wind on the window pane,
the flurries of cold winter rain,
and the grumbling of an aeroplane ;

but these would make his fear without,
and fear within would touch his heart,
threatened by gaslight and the snort

of the cat now dreaming on the rug.
Until he found himself inside, dug
for himself a place, a snug

new unity with kitchen, hall,
bedroom and parlour, and the fall
of tablecloths, the cold white walls,

and crackling fire in the grate,
shaping all to his liking as the cat
turns on the cushion fallen at his feet.

The cat blinks sleepily at flames,
and shining grate, as he now claims
the new surroundings settled to his name.

THE AGNOSTIC

CYRIL HUGHES

ASK me for faith . . . with Reason I reply ,
Ask then for reasons ; I have prejudice.
I am a battleground of thundered creeds
Warring incessantly to offer . . . bliss !

Finality and continuity,
I am the impact of a thousand lies
Drawn, wrangling, from a hundred different truths,
Till who knows nothing is more truly wise.

I am the pose of balanced sophistries ;
The node of rest within the circling dance ;
One reasoned faith I hold above all else . . .
Believe in nothing, saving Tolerance.

MOUNTAIN CITY

H. G. ANDREWS

THAT now my quest be ended
the city won,
Setting my foot to the crag,
the sun rising,
I came ;
the morning gilded
with his windy flame.

And there beheld it, builded
upon the mountain,
its beauty abiding
as the rock,
the great stone shaped
strong to its bastion,
and the towers riding
the clouded wind ;
the portals gaped
to the east.

I found
no footfall on the stair
and silence in the streets
and no man there.

POEM

HARDIMAN SCOTT

I COME now to the country of the heart,
And the wind-worn outlines of a vague
landscape,
Never mapped, except in the fluid eyes
Of a few men, with the sun's quick-silver
Turn on leaf and the dirk-drawn breath of water.
Here the wind alike leans to the willow
And the hollow oak, and whispering hosts
I hear are the waves of oceans and the waltz
Of wings, and I pray : winds lift me to dancing
To the murmuring measure of a single voice.
O, this is the land of the black-mad sun
And the red sun, and you bringing moonlight,
Soft-footed and shy as the leaping deer,
For here is storm and rock-biting the fierce
Green tongues, and sand blinding and
peaceful white.
Here is my ecstasy and incomprehension,
The travail, unpeopled, of all men,
The manshapes of forests and broken boughs
Bursting to the olive leaf. O cast me
Like fire and full born from this magic womb.

WEE JOCK MACKIE

WILLIAM HUTCHESON

HE WAS the company's jester,
Joined us with a joke and a smile ;
He was the centre of laughter,
The life of us all for a while.
He copped it a mile from Carthage,
He died with a " Well, here goes
Wee Jock MacKie for the queue, och ay !
And a seat in the tanner rows !"

I'll bet that he got into heaven
And sits at a golden bar
And planks his golden tuppences
Where the golden tankards are.
He'll smile when they call out "Time, Please !"
But no one will put him out,
They won't refuse the extra one,
And none of us here can doubt
He'll ask for snaps for his album
From each in that golden hall,
Cracking for ever and ever,
Not paying or tipsy at all ;
Lolling against a cloud-bank,
Lighting his smokes at a star,
Tossing for pegs with the angels,
And puffing a gilt cigar.

If heaven be made for joy bells,
Wee Jock will be king of the ring ;
He'll stand and salute the Saviour,
And he'll smile when the Father King
Goes over so kindly to ask him—
" So you are Wee Jock MacKie
Who adds your laughter to heaven's
As you did to the earth's down-by !"

The trumpets and harps and pianos
Will play as Jock sees God's face,
And a mighty roar of hosannas
Will glamour the happy place.

Jock will be one of the cronies,
Surrounded by whirring wings,
Cracking slick jokes with the angels,
And one of the jester kings.

OVERSEAS

G. THURSTON HOPKINS

THERE'S romance in more things than the
 whispered talk of lovers
Secure in a perfumed arbour, sheltered from
 storm and stress ;
Not always fancy smiles on a mind at peace,
 nor always can that mind discover
Rare treasure on the streets of happiness.
The stars more magical are when seen through the
 spear-leaved palm
Than from the city street regarded :
And the mind which bleeds with fear more loves
 the calm
Of hours for contemplation, long retarded.
There's need for toleration in social isolation
From a life grown slightly stale with peace ;
There's room for philosophic thought when
 devastation
Insensibility and death bring pain's release.
There's mystery in more things than the problems
 of unsolved crime
Or fictions concocted for the masses' eager shilling ;
Much there is in these places old as time
And much in the sand to chill—besides the killing.
There are comrades nearer than the life-long brother
Who writes to talk of England's gratitude,
Men who curse you with one breath and
 with another
Grin and grunt their latest platitude.
There's music that you'll never hear outside
 the orient—
Or if you hear it then you'll never know
The thrill of blended sound and scent
Which summon up in a perfumed note, the
 darkest continent.

Beauty dwells not only in the glance of a love desired
Or in an English country scene, sure to trust,
But thrives within the blackest shade—with
 sun retired
It lifts its blessed face from mud and dust.

DISTRESSED AREA

NOEL A. JONES

THE place was strangely barren. Here and
 there
Amidst its desolation, groups of men
Stood, hands in pockets, talking. Grim despair
Had long since shattered all their hopes, yet when
Upon their cross against the sky—
The derelict pit-head and its rusting gear—
A pale moon cast a slender shaft of light,
They became silent so that they might hear
One voice that flung a challenge through the night :
And marvelled that the nightingale
Should sing of joy in Ebbw's vale.

I WILL NOT ADD MY LAMENTATIONS

FRANCES HENEAGE BURKITT

I WILL not add
My lamentations to the raised voices,
Or probe the wounds of the world
Till they bleed afresh.
I offer no plan
For days when the agony is over,
Neither will I discuss my neighbour's sins
With any man.
I have done waiting for some miraculous change
In the human heart—
Shall peace descend like a dove,
And suddenly life be cleansed ?
I watched down the roads of time

For a sign of its coming ;
 I watched at the open door ;
 I waited where there is silence, and men forget
 The anguish of war.
 I turned to the darkened city,
 To the terror over all ;
 I heard the exhortations of the preacher,
 And read the writing
 On the broken wall.
 And I looked to my neighbour for a change of heart,
 I looked for his spirit to wake,
 As one in springtime looks to the almond tree
 Before the pale buds break—
 But I looked not at myself,
 Having no wisdom to see
 That first miracle must be wrought
 In me.

The first issue of "OUTPOSTS" was an experiment, but the results have fully justified our belief in the significance of such a poetry folio at the present time. The success of No. 1 has enabled us to increase the size of subsequent issues. We wish to express thanks to subscribers and contributors, and to all who have assisted us by publicising the venture.

The future of "OUTPOSTS" depends entirely upon the support we receive and we ask all interested readers to co-operate in making the folio widely known. We invite assistance in the form of subscriptions and contributions. All MSS (which should be accompanied by a covering stamp) will receive equal consideration whatever its form.

PRESS COMMENTS, etc.

"'OUTPOSTS' . . . struck me as a little pioneer well worth supporting."

VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST (*Observer*)

"'OUTPOSTS' No. 1 presents a mere rivulet of the poetry of our time, but adventuring with the Editor we should reach the ocean."

REGINALD MOORE (Editor of *Modern Reading*,
Selected Writing, etc.)

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